



March 13, 2009

Testimony on Bill S.B. 839 An Act Concerning Mergers and Consolidations of Various State agencies

My name is Linda Hoza. I am Project Coordinator for the Merritt Parkway Trail Alliance (MPTA) which is under the auspices of Connecticut Forest and Park Association. The Alliance is a group of organizations and individuals who advocate the creation of a safe continuous non-motorized trail along the entire length of the Merritt Parkway for users of all ages and abilities, including walkers, cyclists, skaters, cross country skiers and persons with disabilities. I am also Vice President of the Connecticut Bicycle Coalition (CBC), a statewide bicycle/pedestrian advocacy organization.

I am writing today in support of maintaining the independence of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and maintaining existing funding for this valuable agency. The CEQ has done an admirable job over the years providing oversight of Connecticut's environmental deficiencies and suggesting legislation to remedy these issues. Eliminating funding and placing this agency under the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would be a terrible mistake.

We recognize and appreciate that this is a difficult time and that hard choices must be made to lower government costs. But the value of this agency is in its independence and that would be compromised if it were under the direction of the DEP. Without funding, its ability to function as a source of environmental information for all of Connecticut's citizens would be seriously impacted. Unpaid volunteers and appointed committee members are wonderful and, though they are much appreciated, they can not be expected to give the time and effort that is necessary to research, investigate, provide solutions, attend meetings and all the other various tasks the CEQ now performs -- that takes a leader, a salaried position.

For the above stated reasons, I ask on behalf of the membership of the MPTA and the CBC that CEQ's funding be maintained at its current level and that it remains a stand-alone independent oversight body.

Thank you for your time attention to this request.

Sincerely,

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